



May 26, 2008

Practical Tools

Vern Sanders

Creator Leadership Network

Moving Ahead in Corporate Worship...

This month I asked noted teacher on worship, Tom Kraeuter, for permission to reprint an abridged portion of one of his books: *Worship is...What?*. What follows is from one of the appendixes of that book, which I highly recommend to anyone who leads, plans, or serves in the worship ministry of any denomination. In this particular section, Tom speaks about the dilemma that those who lead worship face after they have spent some time studying what worship is. The most common thing that happens to those who study, and delve deeply into worship preparation, is that they, as leaders, want to move the corporate worship they lead beyond the "ordinary." They want to enable worshippers to be fully alive. (As an aside, I have been asked to speak about this, and the difficulties that can result in a pastoral/staff relationship, in a plenary session to the students at Robert Webber's Institute for Worship Studies during the second week of June. I'm looking forward to it.) I'll let Tom take over at this point:

From my experience and observations at churches that have made such a transition, here are some practical steps to making it work. These are four very basic steps that will make moving forward in corporate worship a reality.

- **Teach the scriptural basis for worship**

People frequently formulate their ideas about worship more from their experience, both their own and others, than from a truly scriptural perspective. Often past recollections mold and shape our thoughts about worship. The things we experienced in church as children, or the style of worship in the church where we first came into a saving relationship with Jesus will too frequently hold more sway in our lives than what the Bible has to say.

Because of this, people need to be taught about worship from a truly biblical perspective. They need to know what worship is, why we worship, how we worship, etc. In teaching these concepts, do not consider anything to be too basic. I am consistently surprised at the lack of understanding of truly scriptural worship.

Additionally, when teaching these principles, do not progress too rapidly. It is easy to get excited about an idea and run roughshod over years of ingrained traditions. Perhaps the traditions need to be altered, but a slower, gentler approach will usually yield better results. The fact is that making a major change in the philosophy of worship may take years for any given church to implement. For us as leaders this may seem like eternity, but for the sake of the people, taking a slower course of action is worth the effort.

- **Teach on grace**

Once you have laid a foundation for worship (by teaching what it is, why we do it, how we do it, etc.) the next step in moving people forward is teaching on grace. People will never fully enter into worshipping God until they understand that He loves them. Many people, even Christians, have a mental picture of the Father as a mean ogre waiting to smack them when they mess up. This image is certainly not conducive to worship.

People need to see that they have indeed been given liberty in Christ. They need to understand that God is for them; He is on their side.

When this type of portrait is painted of the Father there is freedom for worship. Love begets love. When we realize how much God loves us, we want to love Him in return. All the teaching about worship we can do will not substitute for a scriptural understanding of the unfailing love of God.

- **Teach on the attributes of God**

After laying the foundation for worship and teaching about the wondrous grace of God, the next step is to point people to the object of their worship, Almighty God. We need to tell people everything we possibly can about this great God that we worship. They must know about His greatness, His power, His creativity, His holiness, His majesty...all of the things that cause us to be in awe of Him.

When people begin to get a glimpse of what God is really like, they will worship. When we behold God our immediate response will be worship. As we begin clearly to articulate what God is really like, the natural response of the people will be a greater desire to worship Him.

- **Ongoing teaching**

The above steps are only a beginning. They must be repeated. It is easy for us to become complacent in our walk with the Lord. Sometimes it is even necessary for us to be reminded of some of the basic aspects of following the Savior. Because of this, ongoing teaching about these things is essential.

It can stir us up to greater fervency to be reminded about the what, why, when, and where of worship. We find a freshness in our relationship with God as we hear the simplicity of the grace message. We discover more zeal as we are

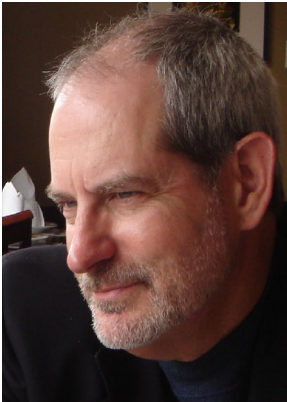
pointed clearly toward the wondrous God that we worship. Teaching these concepts again and again will yield much fruit in your church.

Tom Kraeuter has been teaching for over ten years on a full-time basis at seminars, conferences, and retreats across the US. Formerly the managing editor of Psalmist magazine, and with many books to his credit, Tom's writings have appeared in such magazines as Ministries Today, Worship Today, and Worship Leader. He has been part of the leadership of Christian Outreach Church, near St. Louis, since 1984. [Want to talk to Tom in more detail? Email him by clicking here.](#)

Final Thoughts

The Church Music Directory issue of the print version of Creator is about ready to go to press. This issue contains a "yellow pages" style listing of products, services, and people who can help your ministry. If you are not a subscriber to the print version of Creator I encourage you to subscribe now by clicking on the "Subscribe" tab at the top of this page.

Blessings.



[Vern Sanders](#)

Vern is the publisher of Creator Magazine. He has served in some form of church music and worship leadership for 40 years in a variety of denominations both in the US and in Canada. He is currently Director of Worship at First Presbyterian Church, Grover Beach, California. Vern regularly consults with churches and church leaders. Click on his name above to email him.

© 2008 Creator Magazine All Rights Reserved